



January 29, 2015

FAC Spotlight: COT Couple Are Creative Together

Justin and Melanie McIntosh, both with the Commonwealth Office of Technology (COT), enjoy working together—not only at COT, but also at home taking their creative ideas and turning them into fun artistic items.

Recently, Aric Porter, the COT Chili Cook Off winner, got to take one of the McIntosh's creations home (see article in Jan. 29 newsletter).

Justin came up with the idea for the inaugural trophy after searching the Internet for unique trophies. Melanie designed the shape for the flames, and Justin cut it out and sanded it for a smooth finish. Melanie painted the flames, sprayed the ladle gold, and finally Justin put it all together.

"That's usually how our projects work, said Melanie. "It's a team effort and we both have a hand in every project we do."

According to Melanie, she's always been a creative spirit but never really found an outlet to express it until her first job with the state doing layout and design at the Division of Printing Services. "I was able to express my creativity in a way that excited me," she said.

Justin also worked at Printing Services as a press operator, which meant he and Melanie worked as a team to coordinate and complete many jobs. After getting married and buying their first home, Justin started receiving lots of tools as gifts so he could do some home improvement projects.

"My step-father taught me how to fix things and make renovations," said Justin. "Once those were all finished, Melanie asked me if I thought I could design and make a kids picnic table for our two-year-old nephew."

It was a challenge that he accepted. He built it and Melanie painted



it. Family and friends loved the table, and, hence a new hobby took shape.

The creative juices started flowing. Melanie came up with ideas and designs that Justin makes into reality. For them, it's definitely a team approach and fun way to spend time together.

"We also enjoy seeing that people like what we create, said Melanie. "That gets us excited and helps fuel ideas for new creations. We have branched out and now do burlap door hangers, painted mason jars, and some other projects."

When asked what their most memorable piece is so far, both said it was a life-sized pencil they made for Melanie's brother who has down syndrome and loves to collect pencils. For his 21st birthday, an age that most young men celebrate going out with friends, both wanted to make him something special for a special day. The pencil hangs in his room and he loves to show it off.

Not to be pigeon-holed, the couple is always looking for new ideas and find lots of inspiration from sites such as Pinterest. From tables to signs to birdhouse to burlap door hangers and more—they always look for a new challenge to keep things fresh and fun.

Both started their state government careers in the 2007-08 timeframe. After the Div. of Printing closed, they began working for COT's Asset Management group.



No One Left Behind: The Story of 'Sarge'

Efforts ensure veteran's interment in state veterans cemetery

The call to the Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs (KDVA) came from Ky State Police, Post 5. A man was struck and killed crossing a road in Carroll County. He had no family that anyone knew of. People in the area knew him only as "Sarge." He was divorced and there was no one to claim him. But he had an angel looking after him by the name of Alicia Parham, a criminal analyst with Post 5, and someone who took it upon herself to make sure that Sarge received a proper burial.

Paul Hartless, head of KDVA's Field Operation Branch, is charged with getting veterans all of the benefits to which they are entitled. Once he learned of the case, he searched the records and confirmed that Sarge (Harold Eugene Laws) was indeed a veteran, discharged honorably in the 1950s.

That confirmation was more difficult to make than it should have been as records of thousands of veterans were destroyed

Cont'd on Pg. 2



Middle School Photography Contest for Earth Day 2015

The Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet (EEC) has kicked off its fifth-annual 'Capture the Earth' digital photography contest for all Kentucky students in grades 6-8.



The Capture the Earth photo contest is open to all Kentucky middle school students. Judges will look for originality and creativity, photo composition, and a brief explanation of how well the photograph celebrates the beauty and diversity of Kentucky and encourages others to care about the state's environment through stewardship and conservation.



Last year's winning entry.
Christina Howard, West Jessamine Middle School.

"The goals of our photography contest are twofold," said EEC Secretary Len Peters. "First, we want students to get outside, explore their natural surroundings and connect with nature. Second, this contest enables students to use their creativity and critical thinking skills by taking photos and explaining, in writing, how their photo can encourage others to be better

stewards of the environment."

EEC is accepting entries until 4:30 p.m. Friday, April 3, 2015. The winner will receive a night's lodging at a Kentucky State Resort Park of the winner's choosing with his or her family. Middle school students may email one photograph as an attachment to kidsphotocontest.ky.gov. [Click here](#) for "Photography 101" helpful photo tips.

Official rules are available at <http://eec.ky.gov/Pages/earthday.aspx>. For more information, call Ricki Gardenhire at 502-564-5525 or email Ricki.gardenhire@ky.gov.

Federal student aid programs can help pay college costs

**News from
KHEAA**

The federal government sponsors numerous financial aid programs that can help students and their parents pay college expenses. This brief summary

from the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority (KHEAA) describes the more common federal grant and loan programs. Grants generally do not have to be repaid, but loans do.

Federal Pell Grant: Pell Grants provide up to \$5,730 per year for undergraduates with financial need. The amount may change this year.

Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant: grants that provide up to \$4,000 per year for undergraduate students who have exceptional financial need.

Federal Perkins Loan: loans for students with exceptional financial need. Undergraduates can get up to \$5,500 per year, while graduate students can get up to \$8,000 per year.

Direct Subsidized and Unsubsidized Loans: These loans, also called Stafford Loans, are available to undergraduate, graduate and professional students. The amount students may borrow depends on their year in school.

Federal PLUS Loan: Parents of dependent undergraduate students may qualify for PLUS Loans, depending on the parents' credit ratings. The amount available depends on how much other financial aid the student receives. Graduate and professional students may apply for PLUS Loans if they have exhausted their Subsidized and Unsubsidized Loan eligibility.

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is used to apply for all of these programs. Families seeking a PLUS Loan must also submit a separate application.

For more information about Kentucky scholarships and grants, visit www.kheaa.com; write KHEAA, P.O. Box 798, Frankfort, KY 40602; or call 800-928-8926, ext. 6-7372.

Sarge from Pg. 1

in a 1973 fire at National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis. Only records kept by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Regional Office in Louisville and the VA Medical Center enabled Hartless to confirm Mr. Laws' veteran status.

Hartless passed this information on to Al Duncan, cemetery director of the Kentucky Veterans Cemetery North, in Grant County. Because Sarge had died without financial resources, Duncan considered him as an eligible candidate for KDVA's Indigent Burial Program, and Commissioner Heather French Henry authorized the funds to bury him in the state veterans' cemetery.

On Jan. 27, a cold, cold day, Sarge was buried. Parham had vowed: "I intend on attending his service and bringing a contingent of Troopers with me. I think Mr. Laws deserves that." She more than kept her word. More than a dozen troopers came to the service. Another two dozen or so from Sarge's community also came. Sarge had built up a reputation in the community of always showing kindness to all.

Duncan, the cemetery director, led the service, honoring Sarge with kind words and offering a prayer. Taps were played, some tears were shed. And two service members carefully folded Sarge's American flag and presented it to a man who was Sarge's friend. Sarge now lies in a place of honor.

Because of people like Alicia Parham, Paul Hartless, and Al Duncan, we can be certain and proud that when a veteran dies in Kentucky, no matter what his or her resources, Kentucky will always honor that veteran with services and burial befitting someone who served our Commonwealth and nation.